

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE EDWARD J. MARKEY (D-MA)
HOUSE FLOOR DEBATE OF KOSOVO RESOLUTIONS
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 1999

Mr. Chairman, today the House takes up one of its most important and awesome responsibilities: the decision of whether or not to authorize the use of U.S. armed forces in combat.

I intend to oppose the two resolutions offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. Campbell). I will oppose the removal of our military forces from their positions in connection with the present air campaign, because I believe the President and NATO need to be given a chance to try and stop the bloodshed and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. I will also oppose the gentleman from California's proposed declaration of war, because I believe that such a step would needlessly inflame an already tense political situation in Europe and our relations with Russia.

But while I will oppose the resolutions by the gentleman from California, I think he has done an important service to this institution in bringing them to the Floor of this House. The Constitution gives the Congress, not the President, the power to declare War. The War Powers Act establishes procedures for Congressional authorization of the use of military force in circumstances where war has not been declared. We in this institution have a responsibility to decide when the men and women in our armed forces should be deployed in battle.

And so, I intend to vote in favor of the resolution offered by the Gentlelady from Florida (Ms. Fowler), the Gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Goodling) and the Gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Kasich). We should not be deploying ground groups of the U.S. armed forces in Yugoslavia until Congress has authorized such a deployment. That is what we did during Desert Storm. That is what the War Powers Act contemplates. And that is what we should do. I do not know today how I would vote on such an authorization. I believe that we should be very cautious about getting ourselves into a ground war in the Balkans. And we should recall the lessons of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, and not pass a Gulf of the Adriatic Resolution that provides an open-ended and unconditional authorization for use of ground forces. But we should also keep this option open if the air campaign proves unsuccessful, the ethnic cleansing continues, and all our NATO allies agree that ground forces could achieve our military and political objectives.

I will also vote for the resolution offered by the Gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Gejdenson), to authorize the present air campaign in Yugoslavia. While this campaign is already underway, a Congressional vote to authorize the operation will send an important message to Milosevic that there is bipartisan Congressional support for the President's and NATO's policy regarding Kosovo.

And so, I urge my colleagues to vote against the Campbell resolutions, and for the Fowler and Gejdenson resolutions.